

Processes and methods for studying The Glasgow School of Art Fashion Show

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2017 was the 70th anniversary of Glasgow School of Art's fashion show. The fashion show was initially an extra curricular activity which all GSA students could participate in. However, it is now an assessed element for students on the 3rd year textiles course. Our Department of Fashion and Textiles wanted to create an exhibition to mark this anniversary. In order to do this, the School's archive and museum collections were utilised and new research was undertaken. This research, in turn resulted in renewed alumni relations and informed teaching related to the 2017 fashion show project.

Images (L-R):

Fashion Show Poster, [1980]

Fashion Show Poster, 2009

Fashion Show Poster, 1963



The project ran from February 2016 to March 2017. The main collaborators were Fashion and Textiles staff particularly Dr Helena Britt, and the Archives & Collections team, particularly myself. Each area brought their own expertise to the table: The Archives and Collections identified areas of our holdings which would be relevant to this subject area. Namely: news cuttings, annual reports, prospectuses, ephemera, photographs and film footage. I put together a resource guide which explained the different types of material we had, the type of information each document / item provided, and what date ranges were covered. Helena then used these documents to create a timeline for the development of the fashion show. She provided research expertise, identifying links and trends within the material, and she provided knowledge on more recent fashion show activities (from personal experience and from consultation with other members of the F&T Department). This process gave a good basis for the project. However, it was recognised that there were gaps in the information available.

Images (L-R top row):

The Bulletin, 14 January 1950, GSA Archives & Collections, GSAA/NEW/1/1/7

Fashion Show Photographs, 1970-71, GSA Archives & Collections, GSA/P/1/2408

Fashion Show Photographs, 1970-71, GSA Archives & Collections, GSA/P/1/2410

Fashion Show Photograph, 1987, Private Collection

Images (L-R bottom row):

Fashion Show Programme Cover, 1955, GSA Archives & Collections, GSAA/EPH/1

Fashion Show Poster, 1984, GSA Archives & Collections GSA/EPH/10/13



The next collaborator we worked with was our alumni relations officer, Kate Hollands. Kate helped us to organise a call out to GSA alumni (via email) for information, digital images, or donations of original materials related to the Fashion Show.

We received 45 responses which initially resulted in 10 acquisitions of original materials to the Archives and Collections and 8 donations of digital images for our reference files.

Examples of material received include:

- Four garments from the 1950s and six garments from the 1970s
- Programmes from the 1970s and 1980s
- Photographs from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s

These donations informed research and enhanced our holdings – we were able to fill in gaps within the ‘fashion show timeline’ and we were able to enrich the knowledge we already held.

Images (L-R):

Fashion show programme, 1979

Fashion show poster, 1979

Fashion show photographs, 1979



Images (L-R):

Fashion Show Poster, 1978

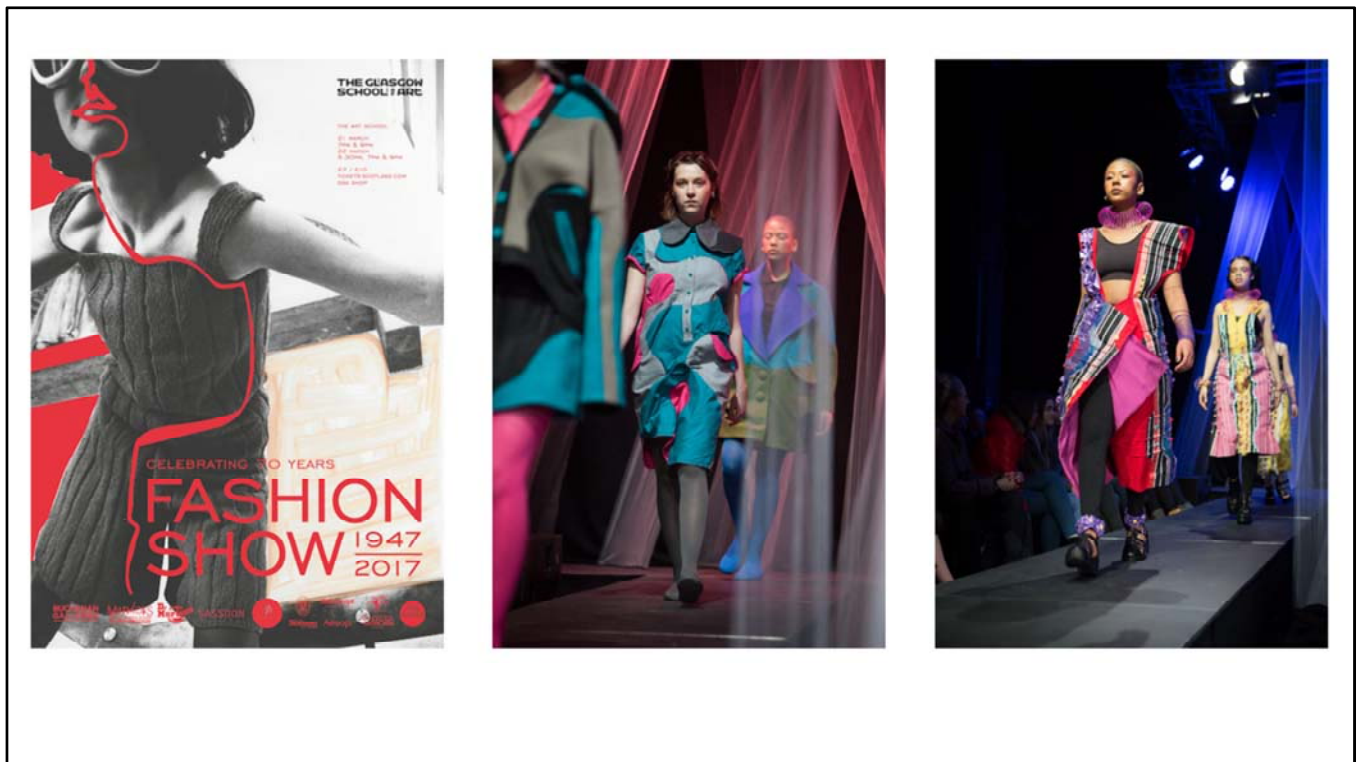
Fashion Show Ticket, 1979

Photograph showing the Mackintosh Lecture Theatre, 1978



This activity also greatly developed the Archives & Collections links with GSA alumni – another group of collaborators on this project! The opening event of the exhibition acted as a thank you to all of those who had supported the research. Since the show we have undertaken oral histories with 4 of the participants and have received further donations from 2 of the participants. We have also undertaken another alumni event (focussing on 1950s graduates) which has broadened our dialogue with alumni to cover other areas.

Image © mcateer



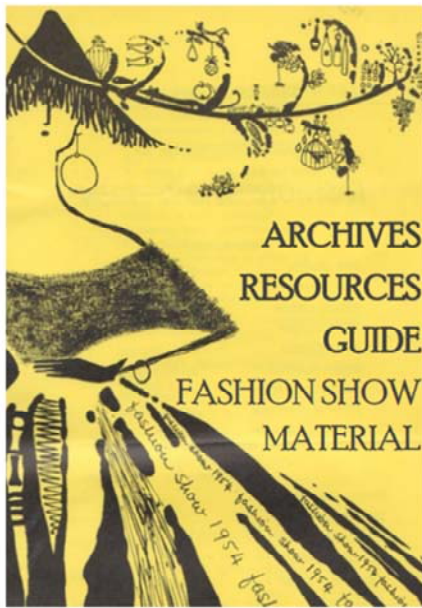
This project also enriched the learning experience of students working on the 2017 fashion show.

Visits to the Archives & Collections have previously been part of the course delivery for fashion show students. However, this project resulted in staff having a greater understanding of the development of the show and the Archives and Collections having more material that we could share with the students.

In previous years, our holdings have acted as inspiration for students. This year, the marketing of the fashion show was closely related to the exhibition publicity.

2017 Fashion Show poster – original image by Robert Burns.

Photographs of 2017 fashion show © mcateer



The project resulted in various outputs in addition to the exhibition.

Research outputs included a conference paper and 2 x journal articles.

In addition, the Archives and Collections have increased their online resources relating to the fashion show. These have included:

- Blog posts
- Catalogue information
- A brief history of the Fashion Show
- A research guide on this subject
- Clips of fashion show films from the 1970s and 1980s

Resource links:

- <http://www.gsaarchives.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Fashion-show-resource-guide.pdf>
- <http://www.gsaarchives.net/2017/03/70-years-gsa-fashion-shows-part-two-1970s-2017/> (see also) <http://www.gsaarchives.net/2017/03/70-years-gsa-fashion-shows-part-one-1940s-1960s/>
- <https://vimeo.com/channels/504825/videos>



This project was completed last year. Since this date, the Archives & Collections and F&T have co-developed another project, using archive material and developing it for current commercial products.

The Archives & Collections are also working with staff in our Communication Design and Product Design departments on exhibitions for later this year. Although these projects do not include alumni involvement, they will similarly result in both new research and new collections documentation.

To summarise, the methodology used in this project has resulted in:

- Positive collaboration between four GSA departments (Archives & Collections , Fashion & Textiles, Alumni Relations and Exhibitions).
- Strengthened links with GSA alumni from the 1950s-1980s.
- Increased knowledge of an area of GSA's history.
- New additions to the Archives & Collections' holdings which have filled existing gaps.
- A number of research outputs.

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